

Gov. Markell Declares May 23, 2016 Zika Awareness Day

DOVER – Today, Governor Jack Markell declared Monday, May 23, 2016, Zika Awareness Day. The day is designed to remind people that preventing mosquito bites is the best protection against Zika and other mosquito-borne illnesses. For further information on Zika prevention and testing, travel advisories, print quality flyers and brochures, and more, visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/zika.html>.

“We are taking this opportunity to reach out through email and social media to schools, business organizations, nonprofits, and the medical community to provide Zika prevention information,” said Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Rita Landgraf. “It is important that we remind people about basic steps we can all take to reduce the risk not only of Zika, should it spread to mosquitoes in the United States, but also of other mosquito-borne illnesses. Zika Awareness Day is about reminding people that a few precautions can reduce the risk of being bitten, including using mosquito repellent and reducing standing water around your home.”

While there has been no mosquito transmission of Zika in the continental United States to date, local transmission is possible so it remains important to take precautions. Zika is a generally mild illness caused by a virus primarily transmitted through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes. The U.S. has over 500 travel-associated cases, including three in Delaware. None of the Delawareans are pregnant.

About one in five people infected with the virus develop the disease, and most people who are infected do not develop symptoms. The most common symptoms of Zika virus are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Symptoms typically begin two to seven days after being bitten by an

infected mosquito. It can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. It can also be transmitted sexually from an infected male to his sexual partners.

There have been reports of a serious birth defect of the brain called microcephaly (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/microcephaly.html>), a condition in which a baby's head is smaller than expected when compared to babies of the same sex and age, and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant.

"DPH will be distributing Zika Prevention Kits for pregnant women at Delaware Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinics and other locations starting next week." said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Recommended by the CDC, the kit contains mosquito repellent, condoms, thermometers and informational brochures. We are taking an 'all hands on deck approach' and working closely with many partners to get the word out and reduce the potential of local transmission."

"The Mosquito Control program's primary concern in Delaware for possible local Zika transmissions comes from the Asian tiger mosquito, an abundant and aggressive daytime biter, which primarily occurs in urban or suburban settings such as residential backyards and business or industrial properties," said Dr. William Meredith, DNREC Mosquito Control Section Administrator. "Their immature aquatic stages can be found in a wide range of man-made containers and other water-holding structures exposed to rainfall, typically close by where people live, work or recreate. For most effective control of Asian tigers, we urge the public to practice good water sanitation on their properties by preventing or eliminating any unneeded standing water that might persist for four or more consecutive days."

To reduce the risk of mosquito bites, use Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents; stay in places with air conditioning or that use window or door screens to keep mosquitoes outside; sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are outside and not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes; treat clothing and gear with permethrin available in pharmacies or purchase permethrin-treated items; and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. To learn more about how to reduce mosquitoes around your home, visit: <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/mosquito/Pages/MC-Spray-Info.aspx>.

Because there is neither a vaccine nor antiviral medications available to prevent Zika virus infection, the CDC recommends that women who are pregnant in any trimester:

- Consider postponing travel to any area where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. For an updated list of countries, visit: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.
- Women who must travel to one of these areas, should talk to their doctor first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.
- Women trying to become pregnant should talk to their doctor about conception plans and the risk of Zika virus infection before traveling.
- If your male partner has or will travel to areas where Zika transmission is ongoing, use condoms during vaginal, oral, or anal sex for the duration of the pregnancy or abstain from sexual activity altogether.

And, if a woman or couple is considering conceiving, and one or both partners has traveled to the impacted areas, they should consult with their doctor. In general, women should wait eight weeks before attempting conception and men should wait six months. For further information on conception recommendations, visit: <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/zika.html>.

“Delaware is ready for the Zika virus,” said Dr. Awele Maduka-Ezeh, DPH medical director and an infectious disease

specialist. “We have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended plan in place with adaptations for Delaware and are constantly updating it as we prepare for the worst and hope for the best.”

For more information about Zika prevention, pregnancy and mosquito control, visit:

- Flyer for pregnant women in English:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikaflyerforpregnantwomen.pdf>
- Flyer for pregnant women in Spanish:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikaflyerforpregnantwomensp.pdf>
- Flyer for pregnant women in Haitian Creole:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikaflyerforpregnantwomenhc.pdf>
- Facts and information on Zika and mosquito control in English:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikafaq.pdf>
- Facts and information on Zika and mosquito control in Spanish:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikafaqsp.pdf>
- Facts and information on Zika and mosquito control in Haitian Creole:
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/files/zikafaqhchc.pdf>

Zika, and many other mosquito-borne illnesses are considered “mandatory reports” to DPH, meaning that health care providers are required to report individual cases with known or suspected Zika virus infection to state medical authorities. This includes anyone with known or suspected Zika, but reporting is especially important in the cases of pregnant women, as well as newborns and infants born to women with known or suspected Zika infection.

To learn more about Zika mandatory reporting and how to authorize medical testing, call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 302-744-4990 or email

reportdisease@delaware.gov.

Individuals seeking TTY services should call 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460. A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can use a TTY to type his/her conversation to a relay operator, who then reads the typed conversation to a hearing person at the DPH call center.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.

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